

Appl. No. : 09/843,025
Filed : April 25, 2001

REMARKS

The foregoing amendments and the following remarks are responsive to the May 21, 2003 Office Action. Claims 2, 5, 11, 21, and 24 are amended, Claims 8, 9, 12-15, 22, and 23 remain as originally filed, and Claims 1 and 4 are cancelled without prejudice. Thus, Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-24 are presented for further consideration. Please enter the amendments and reconsider the claims in view of the following remarks.

Response to Objection to Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-23

In the May 21, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner objects to Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-23 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Examiner further indicates that Claims 2, 5, 11, and 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Each of Claims 2, 5, 11, and 21 depend from Claim 1. As described herein, Applicants have amended Claims 2, 5, 11, and 21 to be in independent form including all the limitations of Claim 1. Applicants submit that amended Claims 2, 5, 11, and 21 are now in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request allowance of these claims.

Claim 8 depends from amended Claim 5 and Claim 9 depends from Claim 8. Claims 12, 14, and 15 each depend from amended Claim 11, and Claim 13 depends from Claim 12. Claims 22 and 23 each depend from amended Claim 21. Therefore, Claims 8, 9, 12-15, 22, and 23 are also in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request allowance of these claims.

Response to Rejection of Claim 24 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

In the May 21, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner rejects Claim 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite for reciting the limitation of "the first portion and second portion" without sufficient antecedent basis. As described herein, Applicants have amended Claim 24 to depend from amended Claim 21, which provides the antecedent basis for this limitation. Claim 21 is in condition for allowance, as described above, therefore amended Claim 24 is also in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request allowance of amended Claim 24.

Response to Rejection of Claims 1, 4, and 24 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the May 21, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner rejects Claims 1, 4, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,201,629 B1 issued to McClelland et al. As described herein, Applicants have cancelled Claims 1 and 4 without prejudice.

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Applicants reserve the right to pursue allowance of Claims 1 and 4 in a continuation application. Applicants have also amended Claim 24 to depend from amended Claim 21, as described above, and Applicants respectfully request allowance of amended Claim 24.

Discussion of Examiner's Reasons for Allowability of Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-23

In the May 21, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner cited various reasons for the allowability of Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-23 if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's reasons to the extent that the limitations cited by the Examiner are not present in all of the claims. To the extent that there is any implication that the patentability of the claims rests on the recitation of a single feature, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's reasons because it is the combination of features that make each claim patentable. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-23 are allowable if rewritten in independent form because each of the claims recites a combination of features that are not taught or suggested by the prior art.

Comment on Information Disclosure Statements

Applicants thank the Examiner for pointing out that all the references cited on Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) paper no. 3 (received by the U.S. Patent Office on August 2, 2001) were duplicated on IDS paper no. 6 (received by the U.S. Patent Office on April 24, 2002).

Applicants would like to point out that a supplemental IDS form PTO-1449 citing one reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,445,840 B1 issued to Fernandez et al.) was submitted by Applicants on February 23, 2003, and was received by the U.S. Patent Office on March 3, 2003. Applicants also are submitting herewith an additional supplemental IDS form PTO-1449 citing an additional U.S. Patent and a PCT Written Opinion regarding a related PCT application. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner acknowledge consideration of the references cited in these two supplemental IDS forms.

Summary

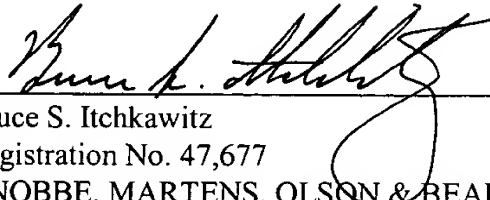
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance for pending Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11-15, and 21-24. If there are any further impediment to the prompt allowance of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney of record at 949-721-2924 or at the telephone number listed below.

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Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 8/8/03

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